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silence of the night, throbs with the irregular rhythm, melancholly, passionate and magical, of the sacred dances of *Voudo*."

Dr. Arthur Holly is evidently learning, but he draws his knowledge from sources that are esoteric and therefore inaccessible to all except the adepts. What he has written is, therefore, neither science nor history. It has the character rather of revelation. It is impressive, but not intelligible to the uninitiated.

From his introduction, however, one gathers that he intends to show that Christianity and Voudoism are from a common source, that "the Bible," as he says, "belongs to us," *i.e.*, the black people, but that this earlier and more primitive form of religion which is revealed in it has been corrupted by the white race.

It is an interesting idea, but more interesting is the evidence that it offers of the rise, among the Negro people of Haiti, of a racial consciousness which embraces in one conscious unity the Negro peoples of Africa and America. It is another spontaneous manifestation of that unrest of the black man which has found expression in pan-Africanism and in the movement in this country headed by Marcus Garvey, whose program is Africa for the Africans.

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The Wings of Oppression. By LESLIE PINCKNEY HILL. The Stratford Company, Publishers, Boston, Massachusetts. Price by mail, \$2.15.

Bearing the certificate of the Lyric Muse, Mr. Leslie Pinckney Hill, schoolmaster of Cheney, Pennsylvania, and authentic singer, is the newest arrival on the slopes of Parnassus. A first glance tells that he is an agile climber, sinewy, easy of movement, light of step, with both grace and strength. Every indication in form and motion is for some point far up toward the summit. Youthful is he, ambitious plainly, and, in spite of a burden, buoyant. "Climber," I said. I will drop the figure. Poets were never pedestrians. Mr. Hill comes not afoot. If not on the wings of Pegasus, yet on wings he comes—*the wings of oppression*. Sad wings! Yet it must be remarked that it is commonly on such wings that poets of whatever race and time rise. And Mr. Hill's race knows no other wings. On the wings of oppression the

Negro poet and the Negro people are rising toward the summits of Parnassus, Pisgah, and other peaks. This they know, too, and of it they are justly proud.

In his *Foreword* Mr. Hill thus states the case of his people, and, by implication, of himself:

“Nothing in the life of the nation has seemed to me more significant than that dark civilization which the colored man has built up in the midst of a white society organized against it. The Negro has been driven under all the burdens of oppression, both material and spiritual, to the brink of desperation, but he has always been saved by his philosophy of life. He has advanced against all opposition by a certain elevation of his spirit. He has been made strong in tribulation. He has constrained oppression to give him wings.”

The significant thing about these wings, in a critical view, is that they fulfill the proper function of wings—bear aloft and sustain in flight through the azure depths. Mr. Hill’s wings do bear aloft and sustain: if not always, nor even ever, into the very empyrean of poetry, yet invariably, seventy times, into the ampler air. Like all his race, he has suffered much; and, like all his race still, he has gathered wisdom from sorrow. As a true poet should have, he has philosophy, also vision and imagination—vision for himself and his people, imagination that sees facts in terms of beauty and presents truths with vital imagery. Add thereto craftsmanship acquired in the best traditions of English poetry and you have Hill the poet.

The merits of this book cannot be shown by the quoting of lines and stanzas. As ever with true art, the merit lies in the effect of complete poems. Still, we can here detach from this and that poem a stanza or two, despite the wrong to art. The first and fourth stanzas of the title-poem will indicate Mr. Hill’s technique and philosophy:

I have a song that few will sing
In honor of all suffering,
A song to which my heart can bring
The homage of believing—
A song the heavy-laden hears
Above the clamor of his fears,
While still he walks with blinding tears,
And drains the cup of grieving.

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So long as life is steeped in wrong,
 And nations cry: "How long, how long!"
 I look not to the wise and strong
 For peace and self-possession:
 But right will rise, and mercy shine,
 And justice lift her conquering sign
 Where lowly people starve and pine
 Beneath a world oppression.

Significant as interpreting the character and temper of the Negro with whom today the white world has to deal, are the following lines from the blank verse poem entitled *Armageddon*:

Because ye schooled them in the arts of life,
 And gave to them your God, and poured your blood
 Into their veins to make them what they are,
 They shall not fail you in your hour of need,
 They hold in them enough of you to feel
 All that has made you masters in your time—
 The power of art and wealth, unending toil;
 Proud types of beauty, an unbounded will
 To triumph, wondrous science, and old law—
 These have they learned to value and to share.

If these poems, taken collectively, do not declare "what is on the Negro's mind," they yet truly reveal, to the reflecting person, what has sunk deep into his heart. They are therefore a message to America, a protest, an appeal, and a warning. They will penetrate, I predict, through breast armor of *aes triplex* into the hearts of those whom sermons and editorials fail to touch in the springs of action. Such is the virtue of music wed to persuasive words.

A sonnet entitled *To a Caged Canary in a Negro Restaurant* will present the poet's people and his own manner of poetic musing:

Thou little golden bird of happy song!
 A cage cannot restrain the rapturous joy
 Which thou dost shed abroad. Thou dost employ
 Thy bondage for high uses. Grievous wrong
 Is thine; yet in thy heart glows full and strong
 The tropic sun, though far beyond thy flight,
 And though thou flutterest there by day and night
 Above the clamor of a dusky throng.
 So let my will, albeit hedged about
 By creed and caste, feed on the light within;
 So let my song sing through the bars of doubt
 With light and healing where despair has been;
 So let my people bide their time and place,
 A hindered but a sunny-hearted race.

It would be an injustice to this poet did I convey the idea that his seventy-odd poems are exclusively occupied with race wrongs and oppression. Not a few of them bear no stamp of an oppressed or afflicted spirit, though of sorrow they may have been nurtured.

A lyric of pure loveliness is the following, entitled:

TO A NOBLY-GIFTED SINGER

All the pleasance of her face
Telleth of an inward grace;
In her dark eyes I have seen
Sorrows of the Nazarene;
In the proud and perfect mould
Of her body I behold,
Rounded in a single view,
The good, the beautiful, the true;
And when her spirit goes up-winging
On sweet air of artless singing,
Surely the heavenly spheres rejoice
In union with a kindred voice.

The Wings of Oppression strikes a high level of artistic expression and makes a quite extraordinary appeal. It is intense poetry, lyrical and meditative.

Here is that solid body of thought which, in addition to artistic expression, is requisite to poetry that attains and holds a high place of esteem. Great variety of form is also here; excellent blank verse with a movement at once easy and restrained, an equable, strong flow, bearing lofty meditations; sonnets after the manner of the masters; octo-syllabics of sententious felicity; various apt lyrical stanzas. Culture alone, of which there is abundant evidence, could not have produced these poems. The poetic endowment, thoroughly disciplined, was necessary. Mr. Leslie Pinckney Hill is a poet. His powers are rich, varied, and developing. His second book will be better than this excellent first.

But more than the merit that has been intimated there is in these lyrics and measured musings a pathos, a restrained Laocoön cry, that must be to thousands an arresting revelation of the unimagined sufferings of the cultured colored people of our land. Mr. Hill's *Wings of Oppression* has a message in it for America.

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